

## MANAGEMENT TOOLS

### The Records Center

Your Office is larger than you think. Did you know that your Office has space for over 12,000 file cabinets of records?

It's true--Just last spring we spent another quarter million dollars to provide more room for your Office files. Today, we want to again encourage you to use this file space we have provided for your Office at the Records Center. We think your operations can be more efficient when the Records Center facilities are included as an automatic step in your Office procedures.

Your Office records, stored at the Records Center, are under your control--ready at any time for you to see, to use, or to have returned to your Office. You should think of the Records Center as additional file space for those Office records you do not refer to very often.

None of us has as much office space as we would like. Naturally we can't waste precious Office space by duplicating facilities provided elsewhere. For instance, an Office bottle of aspirins or a package of pencils would not be duplicating a medical or supply depot. However, an Officer would do some serious thinking before he would install an X-ray machine or an 8-foot crate of bond paper in his Office. Obviously such facilities are available and more efficiently handled elsewhere.

Today, we want to tell you it is equally obvious that a safe with 8-cubic feet of last year's records also should not be kept in your Office. Keeping an old folder or two is understandable and sometimes very necessary. But, to keep in your Office a file cabinet of old records is as wasteful as keeping 8 feet of bond paper.

Records Center couriers make two deliveries a day. Their standard procedure requires every request be filled within the 8-hour work-day following its receipt--most of the time the morning requests are delivered the same afternoon. Many officials have found they can get a file from the Records Center quicker than they could when the papers were kept in a Central Office File.

At present there are 47,500 cubic feet of material stored at the Records Center. Last year the Records Center speedily and efficiently handled 25,600 requests for reference to files and material stored there. That averages about one reference per year per three feet

of records. Said in terms of those old files in your Office it means an 8-foot cabinet full of old files is opened about three times a year.

There are about 1,500 record centers in the country today. Every state and modern corporation has at least one. Including military record holding areas, there are about 400 centers in the Federal Government. Ten major record centers, a specialized center for personnel records, and several annexes are operated by General Services from coast to coast.

Our Organization maintains its own. For a few years we used an old garage across the river as our center. Finally, however, our Records Management Program was installed in enough offices to warrant constructing a building specifically designed as a Records Center.

The savings in money alone is enough to justify the <sup>600</sup> \$400,000 spent for our Records Center building. But, even the money is minor compared to the improved reference efficiency and control of records and information which is part of a Records Center operation.

Stated in a formal manner, the purpose of a Records Center is three-fold:

1. Removal of non-current records from costly office space and equipment.
2. Better reference service on documents and information.
3. Better care and control of records.

Before we have a close look at our Records Center itself, let's look a moment at more reasons why we have a Center.

Every Agency is required by law to have an active Records Management Program. The law also specifies that the Program must include an effective Records Disposition Program. We must add a minor detail here—before you start disposing of anything—There is another law and it is equally specific in requiring that no Government records will be destroyed without the approval of Congress. These laws are not contradictory, but they do emphasize the importance and care attached to every document you have or create. You are bound by law and cannot do with your papers whatever you please.

Because of these Public Laws we have a Records Disposition Branch in the Records Management Staff that will help you with the Records Disposition Program in your Office. They will help you

schedule all your records and will get the necessary approvals for their destruction or decide how long the records must be kept before they can be destroyed.

✓ After your files and their disposition plans are listed in a Records Central Schedule, the next step is storage of your inactive files. We find that it costs ~~4~~<sup>10</sup> per year to keep a safe full of records in the average working offices; whereas, the cost is ~~12~~<sup>2</sup> per year to store them in the Records Center.

To send your inactive records to the Center your Office makes a list of the files being retired and a request asking the Center to store them (Forms No. 43 and 40A). The Building Supply Office will provide a storage box. Call Records Management Staff for a Records Center courier and a reference number for your box of files.

In the attached photos you can see the Records Center Building itself and the reception procedure for your files. The boxes are marked and moved to the shelves. Your request and reference numbers are filed in the Kardex. Your request includes restrictions as to just who may refer to these records. *It from office Rec Cent Sels*  
~~also~~ establishes a date for disposal of these files.

Months or years later, using the list you made and the box reference numbers, you may ask to see one or all of these files. The Staff at the Records Center can locate and retrieve it in a matter of minutes. Finally when the established time for disposal arrives, whether 2 years or 22 years later, an announcement is sent to the Office stating that fact and asking if the disposal instruction still stands.

The Center is staffed by your fellow employees. They have been examined as scrupulously as your Office or ours. They share our loyalties, likes, and dislikes. They are equally proud of the trust they carry and of a job well done.

Two words of caution are offered here to prevent any misunderstanding about using our Records Center.

1. The Records Center should not be confused with the Vital Materials Repository which is another project concerned with that small portion of ~~our~~ active records needed to carry on the Organization's work in an emergency.

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2. The laws are concerned with Government records and these laws should not inhibit any vigorous disposal or control of that ever increasing mass of non-record material in every office. Also transfers to the Center merely involve transfer of files to a new location. Therefore, since a decision must be made eventually the real savings are realized when the unneeded files are disposed of by the Office concerned as early as possible.

Yes -- 100,000 cubic feet of clean, humidity controlled space at the Records Center, enough for over 12,000 file cabinets was created for inactive records.

Call us -- let us help you dispose of those old files in your offices at headquarters or in the field.